Mitchell, Charles Hamilton

Sept 1914 - April 1915
(1.a)

September 12th, 1914

Major C. H. Mitchell,

Corps of Guides, Valcartier Camp, Que.

My dear Mr. Mitchell:

I am not surprised to know that you are in camp, and I was glad to get your letter on my return from Britain. While I know that you are in the place of duty yet I regret that we are not to have you in Toronto this winter because there are several matters coming forward in which your advice would be particularly valuable. Of course the most important is the filling of the late Dean's place. We must get the very best man and go slowly. I notice what you say with regard to Dr. Ellis. He, however, feels that if he is relieved of the work in Chemistry and has no special responsibility for developing the future of the Faculty that he can take the acting Deanship for a year. In fact I think that he would be pleased to do it, and he will be acceptable to everyone I am sure. As to filling it from any other faculty than the Faculty of Engineering it had never occurred to me that such a step should be taken, but for the permanent position we must get the best man that we can find, and one who will make the future of the Faculty worthy of its past. It cannot be a case of what is easiest for us but what is best to do for the future. This Faculty should be the strongest and best equipped Faculty of Applied Science of the Dominion, considering what resources there are in this Province.

If you can possibly get to Toronto I hope that you will be able to find time to run up to the University. This is an awful business

we are in, and you men who are going to the front have to bear the brunt of it, but those of us who stay at home will try to make it as easy as possible and to carry our own burdens and help those whom you leave.

With kind regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

President.

September 24th, 1914

Major C. H. Mitchell,

Valcartier Camp.

My dear Mr. Mitchell:

At the last meeting of the Board it was decided to pay Mrs. Galbraith the late Dean's salary until the end of December. They would gladly have promised an extension, but owing to the state of the funds they are unable to do so meantime. They are also presenting her all the furniture in his room.

I am glad to hear from you. I suppose that you are soon to be under way, though it is all with us as a matter of guess work, and possibly the next thing we may hear is that you are landed on the otherside. I wish you God speed and safe return.

Yours sincerely,

President.

6a'

November 6th, 1914

Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Mitchell,

Headquarters Staff,

Canadian Contingent, Salisbury Plain, England.

Dear Colonel Mitchell:

I hope that you are getting into the swing of your new life in England and that everything is going well. I hear that the weather has been rather bad, but I hope that it will not interfere with the efficiency of the men. We only go by hearsay, but I presume you will not be sent to the front for a month or two yet.

Before you go could you possibly find time to get me a list of the graduates of the University of Toronto who are with the first contingent ? We are very anxious to get an accurate record because we wish to do something permanent. It seems to be very difficult to find out from Ottawa who of the first contingent are our men. Doubtless by this time Toronto men in camp have gathered together pretty frequently. This is a matter of real importance to us, and if you can help us we shall appreciate your help.

You will be glad to hear that we have some 1500 men drilling in the University. Classes have been called off after four o'clock in the afternoon, and the students seem to be throwing themselves with vigour into the situation. A number are going with the second contingent, but it will probably be the third that will get most. Colonel Lang is in charge of the O.T.C., and we have some two dozen members of the staff who have been drilled and are acting as officers. In numbers the Faculty of Applied Science are beyond everybody else. Perhaps that was to be expected.

To our surprise and I may say pleasure we have found that the enrolment this year is not very much behind last year. The heavies decrease in is the Faculty of Applied Science, which is about eighty fewer than last year, but when you consider the economic conditions and the war this decrease is no more than we would expect.

About a fortnight ago I got a glimpse of Mrs. Mitchell in Convocation Hall with your father, but of course you hear regularly from her,

and I have not had a chance of speaking with her.

I hope that your health will continue good and that it will not be very long before you come back safe and sound.

With kind regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

President.

December 9th, 1915

Colonel C. H. Mitchell,

Canadian Headquarters Staff.

My dear Colonel Mitchell:

Yesterday I sent you a cable conveying the greetings of the New Year through you to the graduates of the University or old students who may be at Salisbury Plain or at the front in France. You will know how to reach them as I do not. Our object in sending the cable is to let you know that we think of you, and as I told the students yesterday the message is something like a cheer from the bleachers.

I was interested to get your letter and to find from it that you are preparing the list of graduates. I was also much interested in the account that you have given of the camp. It confirms what we read about the terrible weather conditions that you have had to face in England. You who have gone to the front are enduring a great deal for us, and the least we can do is to think of you at times and try to uphold our end here.

There are some 1600 students in our O.T.C. and I am sure that a large number of them will volunteer for active service. We are waiting for uniforms which will not come until the second contingent has been provided for. I am glad to know that you are keeping so well yourself. Let me personally wish you a good New Year,

I am, Yours sincerely,

President.

Form C.A. 1

617

GREAT NORTH WESTERN CABLEGRAM

GEO. D. PERRY, GENERAL MANAGER

Received at

69 ny bf 25

Salisbury (Jan 16) Jan 17-15

1215

WLT President Falconer.

University, Toronto

Your good wishes from convocation received and issued divisional orders thirteenth please accept thanks Toronto University men first contingent.

Mitchell.

701pm

G. N. W. TEL. CO.
282 College St.
Phone your Messages to
COLLEGE 8504

Headquarters, Canadian Contingent,
Bustard Camp,
Salisbury Plain.
19th January 1915.

To:-President R.A.Falconer, C.M.G.
University of Toronto,
Toronto.

Dear President Falconer,

I assure you it was with the greatest of pleasure I received your cablegram of the 11th instant, containing the good wishes for the New Year from yourself, the Professors and the Students of the University of Toronto, assembled in Convocation Hall.

On receipt, I immediately had the cable put into Divisional Orders, amongst the notices, and these, of course, were issued to all the Regiments, Batteries, Battalions, and other units of the Division, so that all the Graduates and Under-Graduates of the University would be promptly notified of the message. This included also the General Hospital now in France.

Speaking for the Graduates, with many of whom I have talked since the receipt of the cablegram, I would request that you would assure the Professors and Students that we are all proud to claim the University of Toronto as our Alma Mater while serving the country, and you would be highly interested to know that the camaradarie of University men is especially marked throughout the Contingent.

Will you please say to those Graduates and Under Graduates who are forming a part of the 2nd and 3rd Contingent that we are proud of their activity and keenness to serve.

Yours very sincerely,

C. Smith-Cuthbertson

Enclosures.

1. Copy of notice, No.1, in Divisional Orders by Lieut-General E.A.H.Alderson, C.B, 13th January 1915.

2. Confirmation of my cable to you of 16th January 1915.

Print this paragraph only

ORDERS BY LIEUTENANT-GENERAL E.A.H.ALDERSON, C.B.,
Commanding First Canadian Contingent.

"The Bustard",
13th. January 1915.

NOTICES.

(1) The following cable message has been received from the President of the University of Toronto and is published for the information of all concerned:-

"Lieutenant Colonel C.H.Mitchell, Canadian Head-
"quarters Staff, care War Office,
"London.

"From President, Professors and Students University
"of Toronto assembled Convocation Hall to Varsity
"Boys in England and France God Speed you in New Year"
"Falconer".

Chm

[illegible]

[illegible] Lamont,
[illegible]

Your good [illegible]
[illegible] and issued [illegible]
[illegible] accept thanks [illegible]
[illegible] agent.

[illegible]

Preceding the battle of Neuve Chapelle
Rec'd 5 P.M. Mar 9.

Special Order.

To the 1st Army.

We are about to engage the enemy under very favourable conditions. Until now in the present campaign, the British Army has, by its pluck and determination, gained victories against an enemy greatly superior both in men and guns. Reinforcements have made us stronger than the enemy in our front. Our guns are now both more numerous than the enemy's are, and also larger than any hitherto used by any army in the field. Our Flying Corps has driven the Germans from the air.

On the Eastern Front, and to South of us, our Allies have made marked progress and caused enormous losses to the Germans, who are, moreover, harassed by internal troubles and shortage of supplies, so that there is little prospect at present of big reinforcements being sent against us here.

In front of us we have only one German Corps, spread out on a front as large as that occupied by the whole of our Army (the First).

We are now about to attack with about 48 battalions a locality in that front which is held by some three German battalions. It seems probable, also, that for the first day of the operations the Germans will not have more than four battalions available as reinforcements for the counter attack. Quickness of movement is therefore of first importance to enable us to forestall the enemy and thereby gain success without severe loss.

At no time in this war has there been a more favourable moment for us, and I feel confident of success. The extent of that success must depend on the rapidity and determination with which we advance.

Although fighting in France, let us remember that we are fighting to preserve the British Empire and to protect our homes against the organized savagery of the German Army. To ensure success, each one of us must play his part, and fight like men for the Honour of Old England.

(Sd.) D. HAIG, General,
Commanding 1st Army.

9th March, 1915.

1st Printing Co., R.E. G.H.Q. 673.

Facsimile of a message dropped over 1st Cam. Div. on Apr. 1 by a German aeroplane.

563

Infanterie Offizier =
gefallen neben
Infel Ignatzen Haverl

"Hearty Easter greetings from Private Ignatz Haverl"

any case of course we continued our hard work in improving the defences from front and supporting lines and in the reconnaissance of the enemy's lines and work – the latter being the duty of the Intelligence Branch.

Not long ago we were taken out of the trenches and gave over our line of defence (3 miles) to another division and we have been resting in a small French town not far from the locality where we were and in the rear ready for a work for which we have all been preparing and after which – even though that too is now altered – I cannot speak in a letter. As however there was a tremendous amount of work to be done by the Intelligence Branch in preparation for that project, I have been

Northern France
Good Friday

My dear President Falconer

You have doubtless read much in the papers of the doings of the 1st Canadian Division – much is probably true but I fear that the usual (Canadian) war-correspondent's "license" has carried him into the realms of fancy if one is to judge by the occasional papers which one sees over here sent from home. I suppose this is inevitable

For instance I understand that the papers – some of them – are saying that we were in the Neuve Chapelle affair. Such is not the case but it was so close that it was a near go. We went through

very busy indeed – and that too whilst the division has been "resting" However that is the lot of the Intelligence Officer – his work never stops week in week out night and day – and it is usually just what he makes it and is in direct proportion to his energy & alertness.

This work has of late taken me to the front a great deal for observation and reconnaissance generally – opposite the locality in question – and it has proved highly interesting. There are 3 houses – ruins – which are so situated along a road just in the rear of our front trenches that by secreting oneself in a safe nook behind sandbag barricades or holes in brick walls, one can get a view of the German trenches or of their

the thrilling period of tension both before and during the operations over 4 days and at one time (the 3rd) were so close that we actually did receive an order to be prepared to go in – but "it" really didn't come. Our artillery however took part in the bombardment of our front at the same time that our people further down the line went at Neuve Chapelle. In some respects it was an example of the near thing so far as staff work was concerned because we had made all preparations and nothing remained but the doing.

Shortly after this affair was over we got wind, or rather deduced, that the enemy was likely to attack our (Canadian) line in a certain locality and we had another interesting time in preparation but it seemingly fell through. In

graphs are taken from a height of about 8000 feet by means of a telephoto lens. Yesterday I had a long talk with the flying men including photographers & they surprised me with various statements, moderate in the extreme, as to what is being done in the air in this war. They speak of doing things in the air unless we might on land. It is very interesting from below, to watch the attempt by the German anti aircraft guns trying to hit our aeroplanes by shell after shell. Our airmen say that they seldom come down without being hit somewhere by the machine some how by bits of shell, bullets etc. During the battle of Neuve Chapelle 2 of our were shot & badly wounded themselves, but they brought their machines home safely. An interesting thing happened here yesterday morning – 2 bombs were dropped

lines in the rear. These bombs are about 400 yards from the German lines and upstairs one can even look them and far beyond. It is not so difficult to see the features of the trenches and wire in front of them – that could be done by a periscope from our own trenches but what we are more interested in is the region beyond; the 2nd & 3rd lines, the defended positions of farm houses, groups of building, road junctions &c. To study these things through field glasses from safe cover and get the information accurately on paper is not the easy matter and takes time as you can imagine. I have obtained an extraordinary panoramic photograph from one of these houses which shows a great deal of detail in addition to ordinary sketching

in our lines a few hundred yards from where I now sit about H.Q. Fortunately no one was hurt. The same thing happened at an adjoining town, bursting bombs, also no one hurt. But the odd thing was that each fifth bus bearing pilots dropped messages behind lines two of which (in German) reads:- "Hearty Easter Greetings from Uncle Squaks (the pilot's name withheld) Hevere" and "Easter Greetings from Halloper that's 'Driven from the air'" I enclose a facsimile of the former which I now have before me. The latter was an ironical reference to a recent statement by Sir Douglas Haig.

This interesting to study the natives of this region economically & sociologically. This district is of course agricultural but is also a large industrial (textile) centre & you will be interested to know that most of the mills are operating

But the great method of reconnaissance is by aeroplane and it is extraordinary what results they get. You will be interested to know that we are supreme in the air and have complete ascendancy over the Germans. Our observers have consequently been able to photograph the German areas in the rear of their lines for many miles. As I sit I have in front me 200 or more such photographs which show in detail all the roads, houses, farms, villages, railways and other landmarks as well as all the German trenches and defensive works. You can understand how by the aid of these we can make and revise our maps & intelligence reports with confidence. The photo-

put over it in about 15 minutes all under 100 yds and some as close as 30 yards from it but no hits. The shells fell harmlessly in a turnip field. The enemy could not see the house but thought there was a battery of guns behind the trees which surrounded it. What strange fancies an enemy gets! One of the interesting things to do in our work is to appreciate his view point and deduce his line of thought. It is very pitiful and pathetic to see the ruins of homes. The interior all a mass of ruins bricks, plaster, glass, woodwork all in heaps and amongst it and strewn about are books, pictures bric abrac, clothing, household utensils enough to make one shrink and turn away to ask "why?" But

as close as 200 yards whilst the guns fire shrieking shells over their heads. Horses even alike do not seem to mind the noise.

All these things are part of one's day as one goes about and I would like to carry on to tell you more news but this is fast becoming a long letter and I will have to leave much that I wanted like to say. I am telling you a lot of these things thinking you would prefer them to war news – that you get in the papers.

I am sending you herewith some things which will explain themselves – you will recognise Canon Scott's writing. The thing about the Rue du Bois (parallel to and ¾ mile behind our trenches) is about a shrine by the roadside – shell and bullet swept. I have stood beside it with shells falling nearby – it is well told and I think, will be a classic.

With kind regards – Yours sincerely
C. Whitehead

it is the people who remain, in the houses further back – some within the mile – who interest one most. They live and carry on their work as unconcernedly as if far from the fiery war. I have recently seen men ploughing with shells dropping literally in the next field. I have seen the womenfolk stand at their doors and outside in their gardens and watch the fall of screaming shells in adjoining fields 100 yards away as if watching a storm or a sunset. I have seen them too run out of their houses when a shell has burst on the roof – then it is pitiful but they seem to promptly get over it and goin resignedly to carry on their work. Then too I have seen the farmers ploughing in their fields in front of our guns – sometimes as

not only at full capacity but night and day some of them. To see the work people come and go at their gates one could not imagine red war is only 4 miles away – but I suppose it is the same on both sides. We understand that the Germans are making the people in Lille work the factories just the same – it is hard to believe that. The farmers are extraordinary. All the farmsteads for a mile back from our line are practically in ruins of various degrees – of course from shell fire. A few in sheltered places still stand but it is by accident. Not long ago I was having luncheon at one which was fairly intact – about ½ mile from the line & which was used as a Battalion H.Q. for the battalion in the trenches. There were 9 shells

April 21st, 1915

Lt.-Colonel C. H. Mitchell,
First Canadian Division, British Expeditionary Force,
Army, P.O., London, England.

My dear Colonel Mitchell:

I have just received your most interesting letter and thank you for the time that you have taken from your very heavy duties to let me know how things are going with you. Your letter was most vivid and the enclosures particularly interesting. I am sending part of your letter for publication in the "Alumni Monthly" because I am sure many others will be glad to hear of your doings. Our people at the front are constantly in our mind. We wonder every day what the next action will be and whether our men will be in it, and as you may realise there is a great deal of anxiety. We were very sorry to hear of the death of Captain Darling, whom I did not know, though I am well acquainted with his father. It seems too bad that he lost his life as he did.

You will be interested in hearing how things have been going with us. There has been such a movement among the students this winter that the ordinary work of the University is very different from what it was. I am told from all quarters that the students cannot keep their attention on ordinary things, and we are dealing leniently with them at the examinations. We have brought the examinations forward and the session will be closed three weeks earlier in order to allow men to undertake military work. There must be between four and five hundred students of this year either at the front or in military service. The O.T.C. went splendidly with an enrolment of about 1500, and you will have seen the encomium that the Duke passed upon it at review. We are hoping now that there will be a concentration camp at Niagara for 12 days at the beginning of May to give further instruction to proficiency students.

The matter that engrosses most of our attention just at present is the preparation of the Hospital for the front. We are sending a Hospital of 1040 beds with a staff of 40 of our best men, 75 nurses, and about 200 rank and file. I do not believe there will be a better Hospital at the front than this one. The women are working hard for its equipment, and we are trying to raise $30,000 for the purpose of securing the best instruments. A Field Clearing Hospital with

thirty of our men in charge has also gone, so that a good deal is being done.

At this time of the year our regular work for the estimates begins, and I am busy interviewing men endeavouring to secure as low estimates as possible for next year. On account of the probability of the reduction in fees and a smaller attendance of students our total revenue will be much smaller, and we shall be faced with a deficit. I hope, however, that we shall come through some way.

I suppose that on this side we hear as much about the war as you do. The opinions seem to vary very much. At times they are optimistic as to a speedy conclusion. Again they lead us to expect a pretty long struggle. I hope, however, that we may see you back safe and sound with the war over by the autumn. If at any time you are able to drop me a line a shall be delighted to hear from you.

I have just telephoned to Mrs. Mitchell and she tells me that she and her mother are going over to England next month where she will have a chance of an occasional visit from you. This will be pleasant for both her and yourself. With kind regards, I am,

Yours sincerely,

President.